

CADDY FOR CONTAINER AND METHODS FOR USING SAME

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to commonly-owned U.S. provisional applications nos. 60/466,064, 60/483,924, and 60/490,260 filed on April 29, 2003, July 2, 2003, and July 28, 2003 respectively. Priority is also claimed to commonly owned U.S. Design application no. 29/187,049 filed on July 28, 2003. The disclosures of each of those applications are incorporated by reference in their entireties.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] This invention relates to a caddy for a container, such as a waste container. More particularly, it relates to a caddy configured to be disposed over the rim of a waste container and to receive and hold various implements. The invention also relates to a method of organizing janitorial implements and a method of removing waste liners from a container, which methods employ a caddy disposed on the rim of a container.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Janitorial workers typically use standard-size commercial duty wheeled containers, such as standard 44 gallon containers, to collect waste on their routes through office buildings, malls, public spaces and other work zones such as airports and terminals. Workers empty waste baskets and containers into the larger wheeled containers. They also perform a variety of other tasks, which may include: sweeping and gathering debris with a broom and dustpan; dusting furniture; and cleaning dirty tabletops and windows.

[0004] Full-sized janitorial carts are often ill-suited for such "waste patrol" tasks because of their cumbersome size and resulting difficulty in maneuvering through heavy pedestrian traffic and around tight spaces. Consequently, workers often prefer to place a conventional-size commercial duty waste container, such as a 44 gallon container, on a dolly, and then hang necessary tools, cleaning implements, and container liners around the rim of the container. Some workers tape hooks to the tools to hang them from the container. While this allows the workers to move about the work zone, this approach has several drawbacks. In addition to being unsightly and unprofessional looking, this arrangement often fails to adequately hold the tools and implements. Additionally, the workers must remove the tools before the full liner bag can be replaced. Also, this approach may be unsanitary because the workers often push the containers by their rims, exposing the workers' hands to trash within the container.

[0005] Further, emptying large-size commercial containers may be physically challenging. For example, lifting a full 44 gallon trash liner may result in strain on a worker's back. Because of this risk, workers are encouraged to employ the more ergonomic method of removing a full liner by tipping the trash container on its side, and then sliding the bag out horizontally. However, the practice of hanging various implements from the container discourages workers from using the ergonomic "side emptying method" since those implements may fall from the container when the container is tilted.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0006] One aspect of the invention relates to a caddy for a container includes a base having a top surface with an open inner portion defined by an inner lip portion. The base is configured to be disposed on a rim of a container so that the open inner portion is provided over the container, whereby contents of the container may be removed therefrom without necessitating removal of the base from the container.

[0007] According to one feature of the invention, the open inner portion of the caddy extends along substantially the entire circumference of the rim of the container.

[0008] According to another feature of the invention, the caddy fixedly attaches to the container.

[0009] According to still another feature of the invention, the caddy includes handles for manually grasping the base.

[0010] According to yet another feature of the invention, the caddy includes at least one latch for securing the base to the container. Preferably, the latches comprise resilient locking tabs disposed along a bottom surface of the base, and configured to secure the base to the rim of the container.

[0011] According to still other features of the invention, the caddy is disposed on a cylindrical waste container and is configured to receive a plurality of janitorial implements. The caddy may contain a plurality of holders for the janitorial implements. The holders may be disposed in the top surface of the caddy, or may attach to an outer side of the base. The caddy may also include hooks from which implements may be hung. The implements may include bottles, sponges, towels, gloves, brooms, dust pans; towels, and container liners.

[0012] According to another feature of the invention, the caddy has a substantially flat, outer edge portion configured to stabilize the container when the container is tilted onto its side.

[0013] According to yet another feature of the invention, the caddy is provided with at least one retainer hoop configured to hold a liner bag within the base. The at least one retainer hoop may comprise two semi-circularly, movable hoops configured to retain a liner bag within the inner lip portion of the base.

[0014] According to still another feature of the invention, the caddy includes one or more guide recesses formed on a side portion of the base, which are configured to guide a roll of liner bags and facilitate dispensing of liners from the roll. Preferably, the guide recesses include two tapered members forming a pinch point to facilitate tearing liners from the roll.

[0015] According to another feature of the invention, the caddy is formed of rigid plastic. According to still another feature of the invention, the caddy may be formed integrally with a container to form a unitary container/caddy device.

[0016] Another aspect of the invention relates to a method of organizing janitorial implements comprising: providing a waste container having an open upper rim; providing a caddy having a top surface with an open inner portion defined by an inner lip portion, the caddy including at least one receptacle for recovering a janitorial implement; attaching the caddy to the upper rim of the container; and inserting at least one janitorial implement said receptacle. This may include fitting the inner lip of the caddy over substantially the entire circumference of the upper rim of the container. It may also include securing the base to the container with a latch provided on the base. One or more janitorial implements may be held by friction fit in the at least one receptacle.

[0017] Still another aspect of the invention relates to a method of removing a waste liner from a waste container comprising: providing a waste container; attaching a caddy to the container, the caddy including a base and at least one handle attached to the base, wherein the base has a substantially flat, outer edge portion on a side opposing the at least one handle, the substantially flat, outer edge portion being configured to stabilize the container when the container is tilted onto its side; tilting the container such that the substantially flat, outer edge portion rests on a surface; and removing the waste liner from the container. Preferably, the base of the caddy is configured to receive and hold a plurality of janitorial implements, which remain in the base while the container is tilted.

[0018] Other features and aspects of the invention will become apparent from the following detailed description of preferred embodiments of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate preferred embodiments of the invention and together with the description, serve to explain principles of the invention.

[0020] Fig. 1 is a perspective top, rear and left side view of a caddy for a container according to a first embodiment of the invention.

[0021] Fig. 2 is a top plan view of the caddy of Fig. 1.

[0022] Fig. 3 is a bottom plan view of the caddy of Fig. 1.

[0023] Fig. 4 is a front elevation view of the caddy of Fig. 1.

[0024] Fig. 5 is a rear elevation view of the caddy of Fig. 1.

[0025] Fig. 6 is a left side elevation view of the caddy of Fig. 1.

[0026] Fig. 7 is a right side elevation view of the caddy of Fig. 1.

[0027] Fig. 8 is a perspective view showing the caddy of Fig. 1 positioned on an upright container.

[0028] Fig. 9 is a perspective view showing the caddy of Fig. 1, positioned on a container that is tilted to facilitate removal of a waste liner.

[0029] Fig. 10 is an exploded perspective view of a locking tab disposed on a bottom portion of a caddy of Fig. 1.

[0030] Fig. 11 is a perspective view of an adapter for fitting a caddy according to the present invention to a smaller diameter container.

[0031] Fig. 12 is a perspective view of a caddy adapted to receive attachments such as a cup holder, in accordance with alternative embodiment of the present invention.

[0032] Fig. 13 is a perspective view of a container with an integrally-formed caddy according to an alternative embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0033] Reference will now be made in detail to presently preferred embodiments of the invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings. An effort has been made to use the same reference numbers throughout the drawings to refer to the same or like parts.

[0034] Figs. 1-10 illustrate a caddy 1 according to a first embodiment of the invention. As best seen in Fig. 8, the caddy 1 of this embodiment is configured to fit over a container,

such as a conventional commercial-duty wheeled waste container 50. As explained in greater detail below, the caddy 1 according to this embodiment of the invention has various pockets, containers, and hooks that may be used to receive and retain differently sized and shaped implements, particularly commercial cleaning tools, such as bottles, sponges, brooms, lobby dustpans, and a floor caution sign. The pockets and hooks surround the rim of the container for easy access and balanced distribution of weight. Further, the caddy 1 has push handles 22A, 22B to enable a worker to push the wheeled container 50 without needing to touch the rim of the container, thereby avoiding soiling of the worker's hands.

[0035] The caddy 1 according to the invention further includes a flat front side edge portion 3 (also referred to herein as a "nose") disposed on the opposite side of the handles 22A, 22B. The flat nose 3 prevents the container from rolling around on its side when the container is tilted onto the ground for easier removal of a trash liner 60. As explained in greater detail below, implements stored in the caddy 1 do not fall out when a liner is removed from the container 50 horizontally, thus facilitating use of this more ergonomic method of removing a waste liner from the container 50.

[0036] As shown in Figs. 1-8, the caddy 1 of this example comprises a unitary base having a top surface 9. The top surface 9 has an open, circular, inner portion 5 defined by a circular, inner lip or rim 7. As illustrated in Fig. 8, when the caddy is placed over a waste container 50, the open, circular, inner portion 7 is disposed substantially concentrically over the rim of the waste container 50. Waste or other material can then be added to or removed from the container 50 without having to remove the caddy 1 from the container 50.

[0037] The caddy 1 illustrated in Figs. 1-8 includes several containers, pockets and hooks to receive and retain various implements. By way of illustration, these include: a hook 18 disposed on the side of the caddy 1 to hang, for example, a wet floor warning sign 52; bottle holders 16A, 16B disposed at a rear portion of the caddy 1 to hold bottles 54,56, which may contain, for example, cleaning fluid; trays 24, 26, 28 disposed at the rear portion of the caddy 1, which may hold various articles such as a paper towel roll 58 as shown, or other items such as, sponges, rags or personal items; recesses 14A, 14B to hold pens or other similarly sized instruments (not shown); a bottle holder 4 disposed on a front portion of the caddy (shown holding a bottle 62); recesses 34A, 34B configured to receive a duster 64 or similarly-sized implement; a recess 8 on the front portion of the caddy 8 configured to receive a lobby dust pan (not shown) or similarly-sized implement; hooks 32A and 32B configured to hang a bag

or other items (not shown); and a container 6 configured to hold a standard liner roll or bottle (not shown).

[0038] The caddy 1 further includes liner guides 20A, 20B provided on respective sides of the caddy 1. As more clearer shown in Fig. 2, the liner guides 20A, 20B have respective pairs of projections 40A, 42A and 40B, 42B. A pair of projections form a guide path for dispensing a roll of liners. They also provide pinch points that permit liner sheets to be torn from a roll. For example, a worker may insert a free end of a roll of liners through one of the liner guides 20A, 20B and drop the roll into the container 50. The worker can then tear individual liners from the roll using the projections 40A, 42A or 40B, 42B. By pulling the roll, a new liner sheet is made available. As next described, the caddy 1 is also configured so that liners can be dispensed through the liner guides 20A, 20B without having to first remove the waste liner (such as liner 60 shown in Fig. 8) that is disposed in the container 50.

[0039] The caddy 1 further has a pair of retainer loops 2A, 2B attached to the inner lip portion 7 of the caddy 1. In this example, each retainer loop 2A, 2B has distal ends that attach to the caddy 1 at respective points on the inner lip portion 7. The loops 2A, 2B are substantially semi-circular in shape and fit snugly within respective halves of the inner lip 7 of the caddy 1. The loops 2A, 2B may be raised or lowered as shown in Fig. 1. In operation, a worker lifts the loops 2A, 2B, tucks end portions of a waste liner under the loops 2A, 2B, and then lowers the loops so as to secure the end portions of the waste liner underneath. As a result, the liner is neatly folded within the caddy and the container, avoiding the unsightly bag over hang that is typically found in the prior art.

[0040] Notably, the retainer hoops 2A, 2B do not interfere with dispensing of liners using the liner guides 20A, 20B. For example, a worker can drop a roll of liners into the container 50, run the free end of the roll over the retainer hoops 2A, 2B and through one of the liner guides 20A, 20B, and then install a liner in the container 50. Liners can then be pulled from the roll through the liner guide without removal of the liner that is in use (that is, the one hanging within in the container 50). Of course, it will be appreciated that the retainer hoops 2A, 2B may be positioned at different points along the inner rim 7 of the caddy 1 to facilitate this and other uses of the caddy 1.

[0041] In the example shown, the caddy further includes a pair of handles 22A, 22B at a rear portion of the caddy. As best seen in Fig. 8, these handles can be used to move the container 50 when the caddy 1 is attached to it. Accordingly, the caddy 1 is particularly well

suited for use with a container that is disposed on a wheeled-dolly or that has wheels directly attached to it.

[0042] According to yet another feature of the caddy 1 best illustrated in Fig. 9, the flat nose 3 disposed opposite to the handles 22A, 22B serves to stabilize the container 50 when it is tilted onto its side, by preventing the container from rolling. Although the caddy may have dimensions that differ from that of the embodiment illustrated in Fig. 9, it has been found that extending the length of the nose of the caddy 1 (*i.e.*, the distance between the front edge portion and the inner lip 7 of the caddy) maintains the caddy at an angle slightly less than 90 degrees with respect to level ground. This helps prevent implements that are not fixedly attached to the caddy 1 from sliding out of their respective receptacles or containers.

[0043] Preferably, the caddy according to the invention is configured to be attached firmly to a container so that it does not easily come loose while moving the container. In the case of the caddy 1, four resilient locking tabs 30A, 30B, 30C, 30D are arranged symmetrically along a bottom surface of the base portion of the caddy 1, which act as latches to affix the caddy 1 to a container. As shown in Fig. 10, a resilient locking tab 30 extends from a bottom portion of the caddy. The locking tab 30 includes an extension 33 that is configured to engage with the underside of a container rim. When all such locking tabs 30A, 30B, 30C, 30D engage the container rim, the caddy 1 snaps into place and is firmly affixed to the container 50. To remove the caddy, the tab 30 is pulled back from just below the locking tab 33, and the caddy 1 is then lifted from the container rim. Other forms of latches may also be employed.

[0044] Instead of fixedly attaching to a container, a caddy may simply rest on the container. Further, the caddy may be adapted to fit different sized containers. For example, as shown in Fig. 11, a caddy has a slot 45 formed in its inner rim 7. An adapter 47 fits into the slot 45. The top portion 49 of the adapter rests over the rim of a container. By varying the size of the adapter 47, a single-size caddy can be adapted to fit on smaller sized containers.

[0045] It will also be appreciated that the various containers, pockets and hooks of the caddy 1 can each have different sizes, shapes, configurations and locations. Preferably, these features are configured to hold a particular implement snugly so as to provide a friction fit. Any suitable means of securing an implement known in the art may be used. For example, the bottle holders 16A, 16B may have internal fins having widths that increase as they

extend down the sides of the holder, providing a gradually reduced diameter so that bottles may be pushed down and held within the container. Other features, such as the recess 8 for a lobby dust pan may be configured with resilient tabs designed to clamp the handle of an implement.

[0046] The various containers, pockets and hooks of the caddy may be integrally formed within the base of the caddy as shown in Figs. 1-7. Alternatively, they may attach to the caddy. For example, as shown in Fig. 12, a caddy includes a V-shaped slot 44, 42 formed along its outer edge, which is adapted to receive an attachment 44. The attachment 44, such as a cup holder 44, attaches to the caddy by inserting a correspondingly shaped tab 46 formed on the cup holder 44 into a slot 42.

[0047] Preferably, the caddy according to the invention is constructed of a durable plastic material and is manufactured using a high-pressure injection molding technique well known in the art. Such construction has been found to provide lower manufacturing costs while offering sufficient strength and durability. Alternatively, the caddy can be made by any other suitable technique known in the art, such as low-pressure plastic injection molding. The caddy could also comprise, in whole or part, other materials, such as canvas, vinyl, wood or metal. While wood and metal may provide certain advantages, plastic is generally preferred because of weight, production volume constraints and ease of cleaning.

[0048] It has been found that a caddy that extends along substantially the entire rim of a container (such as shown in Fig. 8) provides various benefits. For example, it provides the functional benefit of an extended rim that helps prevent contents of the container from falling. Also, it provides a platform on which containers and implements can be distributed so as to maintain balance. In particular, the placement of the bottle and roll holders in the embodiment of Fig. 1 has been found to be better balanced than designs in which heavier items are disposed on one side of the caddy.

[0049] Notwithstanding these benefits, it will be appreciated that the caddy could be modified in many other ways. For example, the caddy according to the invention could be adapted to extend only along a partial portion of the rim so as to reduce weight or lower manufacturing costs. Further, the overall size, shape and configuration could be altered in many different ways. Additionally, the caddy can be attached to the container in a variety of ways.

[0050] Fig. 13 illustrates another embodiment of the invention comprising a unitary container/caddy 100 having a container portion 110 and a caddy portion 120. These portions in which a caddy and container, are constructed together integrally to form a unitary container and caddy 100. The combined container/caddy 100 is preferably constructed of a durable plastic using a high-pressure injection molding technique well known in the art.

[0051] It will be appreciated that the caddy according to the present invention provides significant benefits, particularly for day porters and custodial workers. It allows a worker to store various implements in a neat and well-organized manner, without requiring the worker to remove all such implements before changing a waste liner in the container. It also allows a waste liner to be retained within the rim of the caddy, without the need to extend the liner over the caddy or outside of the container. It further facilitates and encourages a more ergonomic technique of removing a full liner while a container is in a near horizontal position.

[0052] It will also be appreciated that the present invention can be practiced by combining one or more of the features of one of the embodiments with one or more of the features of the other embodiment.

[0053] Other embodiments, features and advantages of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from consideration of the specification and practice of the invention disclosed herein. It is intended that the specification and examples be considered as exemplary only.